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**Real Estate**

## When Mom Is Just Floors Away



David Goldman for The New York Times

**NEIGHBORS AND RELATIVES** Jessica and Jonathan Marron and their daughter, 6-month-old Ellie, live in the same building with Mrs. Marron's mother, Jo-Ann Crumlish, and sister Jamie Crumlish. Proximity to family, Mr. Marron says, has really been more of a blessing than anything else.

By **VIVIAN S. TOY**

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**WHEN** a real estate broker suggested that Jessica and Jonathan Marron rent an apartment in the Brittany, the same Upper East Side building where Mrs. Marron had lived as a teenager and where her parents and a sister still live, Mrs. Marron knew she would have to let her husband make the call.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/27/realestate/27cov.html>



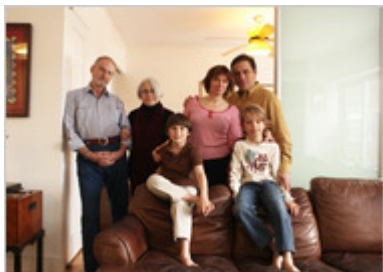
Todd Heisler/The New York Times

**BUILT-IN SITTER** Three generations of Golds call a building on the Upper West Side home. Ms. Gold with her daughter, Jessica, Olivia and her grandson Luke. Jessica Gold says living so close to her mother gives her “a huge sense of relief and comfort.”



Ozier Muhammad/The New York Times

Grandfather and grandsons work together in the complex’s wood shop.



Ozier Muhammad/The New York Times

Penn South is a Holtzman family stronghold. From left are Gary Steward and his wife, Harriet Holtzman, and Kathleen and Daniel Holtzman and their sons, Phillip and Elliott. A Holtzman daughter also lives there with her family.



Jennifer S. Altman for The New York Times

**HIGH-RISE KIN** Eve Markewich with her parents and fellow tenants, Robert and Iris Markewich.

“I was fine with it, because I’m very close to my family,” she said. “But I said to him: ‘Is this going to be too weird for you? Because I won’t just be on the phone with them every day, they’re going to be in the living room.’ ”

The three closets in the front hall sold them both on the apartment. But it was only when Mr. Marron was very sure he wouldn’t mind living so close to his in-laws that they signed the lease.

They moved in 11 floors below Mrs. Marron’s parents and sister Jamie Crumlish, in September. “I figured it would be all right as long we’re not on the same floor,” Mr. Marron said. “But it’s really been more a blessing than anything else.”

Mrs. Marron’s mother, Jo-Ann Crumlish, helps care for Ellie, the Marrons’ 6-month-old daughter, three days a week, and her sister Jamie Crumlish frequently calls to ask for play dates with the baby. So on any given day, at least one of the Crumlishes can be found in the Marrons’ living room.

“I see them every day, because someone is always exchanging the baby, either bringing her upstairs or bringing her back down,” said Mrs. Marron, who is a schoolteacher, as are her husband and sister.

Like other adult children who have moved into the building or the apartment complex where they grew up, Mrs. Marron says that being an elevator ride away from her parents can make privacy a precious thing. But, she said, proximity also has its pleasures, and it has been a relief to essentially live with the family.

For some young families, it could even be that “the new amenity or luxury isn’t a lap pool, but having your brother next door and Mom and Dad available,” as Darren Sukenik, a managing director at Prudential Douglas Elliman, says.

The census does not track the adult children who live within an elevator ride of their parents, but Kathleen Gerson, a sociology professor at [New York University](#), said she would not be surprised if the number were on the rise.

“Young adults are increasingly more likely to be dual-career couples or single parents,” she said, “so they increasingly depend on caretaking networks, and family plays a very important role in that.”

Family networks have always existed in working-class neighborhoods, she added, but they are now appearing in middle-class neighborhoods as well.

While the idea of several generations living in one building may seem novel, Dr. Gerson said, “it’s not that unusual, when you think of large apartment buildings being like a neighborhood in any other place — it’s just a vertical neighborhood. But once you make that mental leap, it’s not as strange as it might seem.”

People in small towns or smaller cities often live in the old neighborhood, she said.

“It’s kind of like the feeling where you grew up and your grandma lived around the corner and your aunt lived there, too,” said Mrs. Crumlish, who was born in [Brooklyn](#), where her family shared a brownstone in Bay Ridge with an aunt and uncle and their children. “We’ve recreated some of that feeling here.”

Mrs. Crumlish and Mrs. Marron have keys to each other’s apartments, but they are mindful of each other’s privacy. Mrs. Crumlish goes to the Marron apartment only when she is expected.

“My sister will sometimes come up unannounced,” Jamie Crumlish said. “But even though she has a key, she’ll always ring the bell and wait for one of us to open the door.”

While the Crumlishes and the Marrons see one another daily because their schedules revolve around the baby, other families in similar living situations say they can go for days without running into their relatives.

Michaela Gold has lived in the same Upper West Side building since she “was a bride in the 1960s,” and her daughter, Jessica Gold, has lived there nearly her entire life. Jessica Gold says that she and her mother speak to each other two or three times a day, but that they don’t see each other regularly, in part because their building has two sides, with different entrances and elevator banks.

“It’s never been like ‘Everybody Loves Raymond,’ ” said Jessica Gold, referring to the television show that uses suffocating family ties for comic effect: Raymond’s parents live across the street from him and are constantly barging in unannounced.

Michaela Gold, who is an agent with Halstead Property, said that several families live in the building, which is on Riverside Drive and 90th Street. “It sounds incestuous,” she said, “but nobody leaves this building unless they have to, and a lot of parents try to buy for their children when they’re just starting out.”

It is the kind of building where a child getting out of school with no one at home can rely on the doorman to know exactly which neighbor to call. “It can kind of be like a kibbutz sometimes,” Ms. Gold said.

Jessica Gold has two children, Luke, 13, and Olivia, 11. She and her now ex-husband moved in as a young couple, because she “loved the familiarity and the sense of community here.” Watching her children grow up in the same neighborhood and play on the same playgrounds where she played as a child has helped create wonderful memories, she said.

She said she had never contemplated leaving, because “knowing that my mom is in the same building if I need her gives a single mother a huge sense of relief and comfort.” In a cooking emergency, she can send one of the children over to Nana’s for milk or flour.

Michaela Gold and her husband, William Slapin, are considering downsizing from the nine-room apartment with sweeping river views where Ms. Gold has lived since 1977.

“When my granddaughter found out, she said, ‘Promise me you won’t leave me!’ and it took me half an hour to reassure her that I was looking for something smaller in the building,” Ms. Gold said. Her 3,000-square-foot apartment cost \$125,000 in 1977; similar-sized apartments have sold recently for more than \$6 million.

Mr. Sukenik, the Prudential Douglas Elliman managing director, says that even in new developments, some families are seeking to create multigenerational homes. He recently sold three apartments at Superior Ink, a riverfront condominium in the West Village, to a family with togetherness in mind.

Two brothers bought apartments one floor apart, and their parents bought a third apartment as a pied-à-terre where they expect to spend three to four nights a week to be near their grandchildren. Two-bedroom apartments at Superior Ink have been selling for about \$4 million.

"That's the ultimate luxury — having a family that wants to send down roots together, and then being able to afford to do it," Mr. Sukenik said.

A dozen blocks north, Penn South, a limited-equity housing complex in Chelsea that was built in the early 1960s to provide affordable housing to middle-income people, is becoming a family village. Many people who spent their childhoods there have returned with their children.

Vivian Connolly, now 36, and her brother, Daniel Holtzman, 43, are among them. Their mother, Harriet Holtzman, who has lived in the development since the 1970s, put their names on a waiting list for apartments in one of Penn South's 15 buildings as soon as they turned 12.

"I was always sort of waiting for my name to come up and I always planned to live here, unless I left New York," Ms. Connolly said. "My brother and I call it the golden handcuffs, because it's such a good deal that we'll never leave — my mom got it all worked out perfectly, but it was probably the best gift she's ever given us."

She points out, however, that when they were growing up, Chelsea was "a scary neighborhood with gangs and people wanting to beat up my brother."

Daniel Holtzman moved back first, and Ms. Connolly lived with him for a short time before she got her own studio when she was 23. Another sister also lived in the complex for a while, but has since departed for the suburbs.

"My brother and I are the lifers," said Ms. Connolly, who has moved up to a two-bedroom apartment with her husband, Chris, and their 5-year-old son. She is expecting a second baby in March, and as soon as the child is born, she will put her family on the list for the holy grail of apartments at Penn South, a three-bedroom. "I know that will be a long wait," she said, "because there aren't that many of them."

These days, the average price of a two-bedroom apartment at Penn South is about \$48,000, with maintenance starting about \$900, whereas two-bedrooms elsewhere in Chelsea cost about \$1.25 million. Penn South's waiting list, now closed to nonresidents, contains more than 6,000 names and applicants can expect to wait at least seven years.

Ms. Holtzman said she put all three of her children on the list when they were young because she figured their names would come up around the time that they graduated from college. "When you want to live in



[Manhattan](#),” she said, “you’re grateful to have affordable housing wherever it is.”

The bonus for her, of course, is that she now has grandchildren who can walk to her apartment, just a building away from their homes, without having to cross a street.

When Daniel Holtzman’s wife, Kathleen, moved into his Penn South apartment, they went through a period when they felt they had to establish boundaries with his mother. “It was very strange at first,” Kathleen Holtzman says, “because we could see his mother’s apartment from ours and we had to tell her it was unfair to call and say: ‘Why didn’t you pick up the phone? I knew you were home because I could see your light was on.’”

“But that’s not an issue anymore, and once we had children, having an extended family around became so important.”

Their sons, Elliott, 9, and Phillip, 7, go to Harriet Holtzman’s law office in Chelsea after school every Tuesday to do their homework, and Ms. Holtzman’s husband, Gary Steward, often takes the boys home or over to the complex’s wood shop, where they have worked on projects together. Their latest one is a single-engine airplane made out of scraps they found in the shop.

Aside from the Tuesday arrangement, the three families do not have any standing dates. “No Sunday-night dinner or anything like that, because I wanted to avoid that old-fashioned obligation feeling,” Harriet Holtzman said. “I just consider us unbelievably lucky in our living situation.”

Being near grandparents and having easy backup for child care are not the only reasons adult children choose to live where they grew up. Sometimes, easy access to aging parents is just as much an incentive.

Eve Rachel Markewich lives in the same Upper West Side building as the Gold clan — and her parents. Twenty years ago, when she returned to her childhood address, it was for a variety of reasons. She missed the Hudson River views, and she felt living nearby would make communicating with her father easier, because he is hard of hearing and phone conversations are a challenge. She was then a young lawyer, and her father’s extensive law library also came in handy for research on weekends or at night.

Her parents, Robert and Iris Markewich, live in the same nine-room apartment where they met in 1947, when Mr. Markewich's aunt and uncle lived there. They made it their home in 1955, and in 1968 Mr. Markewich helped organize the building into a co-op. "There was a lot of opposition initially," he said, "but rent was starting to get oppressive. We were paying \$175 a month, which was a lot of money back then."

Eve Markewich's four older siblings gave her a hard time when she moved back into the building. "They thought it was sick, because who lives in the same building as their parents?" she said. "But I adore them."

By 1997, though, Ms. Markewich realized that while she loved being able to wander into her childhood home at will, she wasn't as keen about her parents' having a window on her life. "Once," she said, "I opened up my door to discover that my Sunday Times had been used and my parents had obviously stolen my paper and then returned it to me."

Then she realized that her parents had been asking the doormen about her comings and goings. "That was it, I had to move," she said, "even though I really didn't want to leave the building."

"We weren't really trying to keep tabs on Evie," said Iris Markewich, 83. "We would never do something like that, because we were perfect parents," she added with a smile.

But Michaela Gold came up with the ideal solution when she helped Eve Markewich find another apartment on the other side of the building, which has a different crew of doormen.

Being so close to one another came in particularly handy last spring when Iris Markewich shattered a leg in a fall, and wound up at a rehabilitation center on the East Side. "It made things so easy for me to be able to pick up my father and take him to see her and then bring him home," Eve Markewich said.

One night, after visiting her mother, she and her father returned to her apartment for dinner and to watch a baseball game. Mr. Markewich, who is 90 and walks with a cane, fell asleep on the couch, and at 11 p.m., when Ms. Markewich wanted to call it a night, she telephoned a sister to ask "would it be O.K. to leave Daddy sitting there like that?" She did and went to bed.



About two hours later, she heard her father get up and head for the front door. She shouted out a good night to him and he was off. “It was really nice to know that I didn’t have to worry about him going out and looking for a cab, and that in just a few minutes he would be home,” Eve Markewich said.

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